**Praise, Question, Wish**

The PCW-[Praise, Question, Wish](http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/2868)-strategy is offered by NWP as a way to respond to writing. However, I made some modifications (e.g., changed “reader” to “artist”) with the thought that it could be used for artists.

**Praise**: Most artists long for some kind of recognition, so begin your response with praise. What about the piece is memorable? If after a first view you immediately had to tell another person what caught your attention, what would you say? Be very specific about what you liked by using an example. If you keep an open mind and a sympathetic attitude, there is always something worth praising, and by beginning with a positive example, you increase the likelihood the artist will be receptive to any changes you suggest.

Also, if a piece is very good, don't be stingy! Cite multiple examples of what you like. The key is to be sincere and specific. While "You are the greatest artist ever!" is initially pleasing, most writers prefer to hear *why* their piece works more than a hollow hooray.

**Question:** Next, ask the artist about anything that confused you or seemed inconsistent while you viewed the piece. Statements can easily seem confrontational; questions allow the artist to consider for him or herself without feeling directed. For example, saying "I really didn't get why the horse was so important" could be read as an attack, whereas "The horse seems important. Can you tell me more about why it was so important?" gives the writer a space to make a judgment without feeling judged.

Sometimes what is in the artist's head doesn't make it to the canvas or the blog, yet the writer sincerely believes he or she has communicated clearly. A constructive question from you can point out such blind spots. Asking such questions does not challenge the artists skills, yet still says something needs a second look. As long as you ask sincere questions, you will be helpful to the artist.

**Wish.** Even experienced artists and bloggers sometimes miss an opportunity to make their piece the best it can be. As a reviewer, you may see potential that is invisible to the artist, so you naturally want to share your insight. Since many artists are sensitive about receiving advice, it is a good idea to avoid sounding like you are directing their piece. The word *wish* has a positive connotation, so starting your advice with I *wish* avoids the tone of a command. For example, "I wish you would tell more about the horse."

Along with *wish*, another helpful word is *consider*. Saying "Consider changing this..." communicates the writer is in control and that the reviewer is not some expert ordering mandatory changes.

[**How to Facilitate the Peer Review Proces**](http://www.artsbc.org/resources/for-organizations/events-exhibits-and-workshop-planning/events-and-exhibits-how-to-facilitate-the-peer-review-process)**s**

This is a protocol for a group review with a facilitator posing the discussion questions. Participants are to suspend judgment until the completion of all four steps.

**Step 1**. Peer review participants will give a factual description of the piece. The facilitator ensures that all comments are based purely on the visual aspects of the work, curtailing any judgment, critical comments, or other assumptions.

**Step 2**. Peer review participants will discuss and describe the relationships between tone, texture, mood and colour in the work (i.e., is the piece is balanced, what is the relationship between red and blue contrasts, etc.)

**Step 3**. Peer review participants will attempt to assess the overall success of the work, paying particular attention to the artists intent. Participants should review any adjunct materials including the title or the artist’s statement. In this step participants can make use of more emotional statements (i.e., the blue overwhelms the red in this work.)

**Step 4**. Peer review participants can now assess whether the work is ultimately successful. Whether they enjoy the work (or not), having gone through the above questions/responses they will discover if the work meets its stated intentions.

**Adaptation of Feldman’s Aesthetic Criticism** for peer review of blog posts

I. Give an introduction to the facts of the post: Who? What? When? Where?

II. Critique the artwork in four steps:

**Description**

Make objective\* or value-neutral\* statements about the work in question.

Exclude interpretations and evaluations, and instead take an objective

inventory of the work. Point out single features such as objects, trees, and

people. Then point out abstract elements such as shapes and colors.

Finally point out materials or technologies used to compose this artwork.

\*A test of objectivity would be that most people would agree with your

statement.

**B. Formal analysis**

Make statements about the relations among the things you named in the

descriptions (part A). You should note similarities and dissimilarities in

formal elements–such things as color, shape, or direction. Take note of

continuities (such as the color red repeated throughout the work) and of

connections (for example, the shape of a window repeated in the shape of

a table) between these formal elements and the subject matter. What kind

of spatial devices are used to create dimensionality? Do you see

examples of repetition or rhythm? Finally, note the overall qualities of the

work.

**C. Interpretation**

Make statements about the meaning(s) of the work. This is the most

creative part of your critique. Using a hypothesis, support it with

arguments, based on evidence given in the description and formal

analysis. (parts A and B)

**D. Judgment**

This is the most complex part of the critique and requires an opinion

regarding the worth of an object, based on what was learned in the

previous stages of the critique. Evaluate the craftsmanship and technique.

Are parts of the work successfully interrelated? Does the work illicit a

response or communicate an idea? Are you moved by this work? What

do you think of it? What is your aesthetic judgment? And on what is

based?

III. Draw conclusions.